FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

"For a world united in prayer"

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FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER
Founded by Carl Allison Evans (1880-1956)

OUR PURPOSE: To promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God, regardless of race, creed or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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EDITORIAL

ASSURANCES

SINCE the beginnings of my conscious spiritual life happened to coincide with these editorial duties, I have probably written more personally in these pages than most editors would—because what I had to say *ex officio* was, literally, what I would have confided in a letter. As you know, moreover, I believe that we understand each other to the degree that we are able to identify with each other, and this obligated me, accordingly, to picture myself in sufficient detail and candor so that, hopefully, the process of identification might occur. Thus by this time you probably can tell me things about my spiritual life (some of you have) that I am only beginning to comprehend. Let me, nevertheless, note a few changes. . . .

Probably because most of us are raised in good homes with the rites and certainties of faith being inculcated into us as religiously as oatmeal, I believe we are inclined—I am, anyway—to expect the spiritual life to be a passive one, something to be administered to us by professionals like medicine or algebra and other essentials of this world. My experience, though, has been just the opposite. For me the spiritual life has involved me in two highly active stages of being—first, the willingness to let myself get well and be healed, and, second, the constant search for contact with God, that power infinitely greater than myself that I don't understand, so that my recovery from confusion and embramblement can be accomplished by the grace of this power and I can start to rest in the uniquely marvelous sensation of being sustained that invariably follows.

Another—and to me wonderfully valuable—change has been the knowledge that I am never going to lose contact with this power: I couldn't. I possess and cherish this knowledge even when I touch bottom in despair nowadays, I count on and trust its existence, I hope and pray and await its return—and it returns. This is a boon and a bliss I did not enjoy when I was younger, when everything was will and battle and determination.

And still another change has been my discovery of the part

others play in God's lovingness and wish to sustain and care for me. I see what the Quakers call 'that of God' in all my fellows on this earth. How could I have been blind to it for so long? No matter. It's in their company and friendship—not alone at all, and not a bit afraid at last—that I do my worshipping now. —P.G.

EDENWARD

Conrad Pendleton

The fragrant passions of the spring
have churned into my winter blood,
and brightly pulse through every vein
and burgeon rapture's bud
from sorrow's sheaf of moody ice.

Now like a tree whose branches sing
through mouths of flowery mirth,
I root into the golden pain
heaving the breast of April earth
and lift its dream to Eden skies.

EXTRAPOETIC

Henry Hubert Hutto

I do not deny
an extrapoetic aim;
I would praise my Lord.

THE PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS *by Reuben L. Musey*

FEBRUARY REFLECTIONS

THE SECOND MONTH of the year, also the shortest in number of days, has often been referred to as the month for the "sons of February." This no doubt came about because two of our presidents—Washington and Lincoln—were born in February. Coincidental or not, Washington was the unanimous choice for President on the fourth day of February, 1789. On the twenty-seventh, in 1860, Lincoln spoke at Cooper Institute in New York City shortly after consenting to let his name be proposed for nomination to the Presidency at the Republican Convention which was to be held in Chicago the following May.

In February, 1950, twenty-five years ago, a mimeographed sheet brought to the readers of *Fellowship in Prayer* news of the fellowship, then in its infancy, the dreams...the aims...the desires. . . .

With the "For a world united in prayer" guideline, and the praying hands of the German Renaissance painter Albrecht Durer gracing the cover, time in its passing and God in His way would guide the Fellowship, and the dreams, aims, and desires would become a reality one day.

In this present hour, the fruits of labor are evident in the publication as it appears today.

February reflections. . . .

George Washington, the father of our country, was, as Henry Lee said, "First in war, first in peace, first in the hearts of his countrymen. . . ."

He was supreme in war, in council, and in peace. He was the hero, the patriot, the Christian.

As a man of God, these inspiring words from his first Inaugral Address he left for all mankind: "No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than those of the United States."

Abraham Lincoln, the martyred President, was a man of

the people. He rose from log cabin to the Capitol. He sent the keen ax to the root of wrong, clearing a free way for the feet of God.

From His Second Inaugural Address, in binding the wounds of the nation, Lincoln spoke words that inspire your heart and mine: "The Almighty has His own purposes. . . ."

Fellowship in Prayer's twenty-fifth anniversary theme, "A Look Backward...An Aim Forward" continues.

You are the Fellowship's closest friends. Its dreams became a reality because of you. Its aims for the future also need the pronoun "you" as guide.

Responses to the goal of our silver anniversary year—with every member bringing in as many new ones as possible—have been favorable. Many new readers are reading this issue.

The brightest flame of the torch is radiating to people everywhere the motto: "For a world united in prayer."

Reuben L. Mussey

DUSK

Esther Belle Heins

On tiptoe, Dusk again comes in,
I hear her gently sigh;
It could be though, the fragrant breeze
Just whispered, passing by.

She takes her veil of gossamer—
(For soon the day will die)
And slowly wipes the picture out
God painted in the sky.

She chides the blooms that will not sleep—
Turns off the last faint light,
Then silently she disappears
Into the velvet night.

POEMS

by Millicent Chatel

1/ Listening

I hear one song only
Repeated forever
By myriad beings—

Many singing one—
One singing many
In tones and overtones,
Seductive,
Beguiling.

Adventures of Spirit
Playing on a
Subtle soul structure
Hidden behind
The body physical.

2/ Black

Black, the silence of color,
Sings out to the dark being
With eyes not seeing
The beauty of black.

In black is that black of silence
Where mysteries sleep
By cold unknowing of knowing,

Waiting for love to repeat
The words of the silence of color
And hear the beauty of black.

Then hearing will see
And seeing will hear
Why silence is there.

3/ O Mean Dream

You, I have played with—
You were my companion—
Lo, these many many years—
Leave me now forever.
Show not your face again.
For I have found
A vision.

4/ Beyond Experience

Do not promise me this or that;
Nothing more to insult
My eternal spirit,
No wages for projects
To sequester my soul;
No promise of structures
Or assemblies
Or starry circles
To continue my dream,
For it is drugged already by thought
Enough to make experience infinite.

"No satisfaction" embroidered
On a garment of mist
Is my only ornament
This while.

5/ Via Negative

Yes is not alone.
With no it is complete.
The negative counterpart
Is the companion—
In all that is said—
In all that is done—
The fitting way,
The mysterious source of perfection.
The indirect way
Of the feminine is the work
Of the left hand.

What is not said or done
Makes what is said or done perfect.

6/ Nothing

It is a story that is told
This life of ours
It has no substance
To make bold
Our claim to fame.

But oh, so sweet and beautiful
Its measure,
That the very "nothing"
Of its essence
Is its treasure.

That "nothing" is personified
In story form
As the Virgin of the World.
And in man's simple life
Gives birth to God
Where love is born.

CINQUAIN

Richard Ward

Before
I depart from
this plane of existence,
I will prepare the way by my
prayer.

A SILVER LINING FOR GOD

Vivian M. Singerling

I wonder what God is thinking
  Up there in the Heavenly Blue?
As He peers upon the world below
  Tears dim His eyes, a sorrow's clue,

Sees churches sparsely attended—
  Many Bibles gathering dust;
Waste and destruction of Nature
  He had given to us in trust.

What do I care? is the slogan
  Of many who walk this earth,
With selfishness, greed their tenet.
  No thoughts such as these at birth!

I pray to the Heavenly Father:
  Wipe the tears from Your eyes and see:
You still have some faithful children;
  They're a pure 'silver lining' for Thee.

THE TAIL OF THE DRAGON

Excerpts from the new book by Francis Merchant

Introduction

LONG BEFORE man created the alphabet, Nature addressed him in a language of her own. In mountains, valleys, oceans, and stars she has ever been speaking—in the ageless rhythms of the tides, the alternating patterns of day and night, in the many-colored flowers and upward-thrusting trees, in the filigreed snowflake and the whispering wind, in the intermingling of light and dark, in the stillness of a snow-covered landscape in moonlight, in the ever-fluctuating waves of the ocean, in the distant planets that ceremonially circle the sun, in the thunder of the storm and the silence of the mountain lake, in minerals and precious stones deeply hidden in the earth, in the varied animal creation, and, above all, in the grand enigma called man.

But who shall interpret the language of Nature? Who shall tell us what she is saying? Who shall reveal her purposes and intentions? Neither the botanist nor the zoologist can read the meanings of Nature's alphabet, for they tell us mostly about letters, not about words and sentences. Much is said about illiteracy with regard to human language, but very little about illiteracy with regard to the non-verbal language of the encompassing universe. Artists and scientists have admonished us to observe Nature rather than to commune with her and thereby discover her unvoiced purposes and intentions.

What procedure shall we follow in our quest? Let us provide ourselves with a goodly store of imagination as we try to decipher the tablets of daily experiences. Moreover, let us begin with simple things and commonplace occurences, always seeking to find octaves of meaning beyond the factual manifestation. The ephemeral life of a gnat may lead us to speculations concerning the birth and death of solar systems. The keyboard of a piano may suggest that every fact has its higher octaves of subtler correspondences. The restless waves may find an analogy in the

moody emotional nature of man, and the upward-mounting fire of the hearth, in the aspiration of the focussed mind.

The procedure to be followed involves the statement of a theme followed by an elaboration of its implications. The statements may seem commonplace and unenlightening. The elaborations will add imaginative insight and speculative excursions. On the bones of fact we shall seek to add flesh. That which seems commonplace and ordinary may be shown to have unusual and universal implications. The bald fact, when pondered upon, may become revelatory. The physical may become metaphysical. Something we have known all our lives may suddenly take on new meaning. Indeed, we may find ourselves peering into the mind of God and the intention of the Creator as we ponder the well-known phenomena of Nature. That which surrounds us may provide us with burnished keys to the mystery of life.

The puzzle of the commonplace is our theme. We may find sermons in stars and stones, and metaphysics in a grain of sand or an icicle. We shall study the strange, symbolic language by means of which the Creator daily addresses us.

Here, then, is the challenge. The reader may test himself or others by trying to elaborate on the terse statements that serve as a theme—and then comparing his results with the unfolding ideas of the elaborative section.

The thoughtful person may build a sound philosophy of life by considering the world about him as a forest of symbols. The pondering mind will find in Nature an inexhaustible source of material. Trying to discover the intention of the Creator by a contemplation of the forms he has placed all around us may be one of the most meaningful activities in which any human being can engage.

The following procedure is recommended in regard to each theme or exposition: 1) On the first day read the introductory theme and seek to unravel its meaning for yourself. Make notes in connection with your elaborations or developments. 2) On the second day, read and ponder the textual interpretation. 3) On the third day, compare your preliminary notes with the presented elaboration of the theme and develop your conceptions so that

a meaningful synthesis emerges.

May the searching inspire, the process stimulate, and the finding enrich you. If you can't find the Dragon in these pages, be not dismayed. He has been hidden for many long centuries. Some day, perchance, when the gusty autumnal wind blows over the bleak landscape, you may hear his melodious whisper, and your heart will rejoice.

1/
Theme: One end of a cord leads to the other.

Exposition: If one grasps the end of a cord and follows it, one will inevitably reach the other end.

The mythological story of Theseus and Ariadne provides a significant application of this concept. Having been defeated in battle, a certain king was compelled to sacrifice seven men and seven women every year to a monster called the Minotaur, who dwelt in a labyrinth. The latter was so intricately arranged that no one who went in could find his way out. Theseus determined to end this barbarous practice and volunteered to be one of the victims. When he arrived at the place of sacrifice, the ruler's daughter, Ariadne, fell in love with him. She gave him a ball of thread and told him to tie one end at the entrance to the labyrinth, for then he could always follow the thread and return to the place where he had entered. He did as she advised, slew the Minotaur, and came back by the thread he had unraveled.

There are many threads about us that, if grasped and followed, would lead to exalted heights. Between man and God such a thread exists. There are others that can lead us from the unreal to the real, from time to eternity, from the actual to the ideal.

The search for saving threads is a worthy quest. They can enable us to rise from the depths to the heights if we are willing to follow them. We must be sure, however, that they lead us in the right direction, and progress of that kind depends on their quality.

The thread that leads to a man's soul is near at hand. He has only to grasp it.

2/

Theme: There are seven octaves to a piano.

Exposition: Anyone who has touched the keys of a piano knows that those on the left are the lower register and those on the right the upper. Seven times the scale is repeated, so that each one resembles the others, yet is recognizably different.

This observation leads us to speculate on what might be called the doctrine of octaves, namely that man's world is the lower register of a scale and God's world the higher. The earth is a shadow of Heaven, and everything that is learned in one has meaning in the other. The sorrows and sufferings men experience in the lower register might be exquisite melodies in the higher. Such a possibility is hard to conceive on this plane of awareness, but it is worthy of speculative pondering. It adds another dimension of meaning to the stern experiences we must undergo.

Every truth, then, would have seven interpretations and definitions, depending on which octave is being considered. It is no wonder that truth is such a complicated affair.

The task of trying to interpret concepts in terms of a higher octave offers a stimulating exercise for a lifetime's contemplation. Physical birth in another octave signifies spiritual birth. Being asleep may not only be a matter of resting in bed. A person may be asleep emotionally, mentally, or spiritually. Light may not be related only to a lamp or the sun. We may speak of the illumination of the mind or of the spirit. When we call a sage enlightened, we are not referring to the sunlight at all.

The attempt to think in terms of octaves may add a new dimension to our understanding of life.

4/

Theme: Man is an effect in search of its cause.

Exposition: Galileo discovered that water rises thirty-two feet in a vacuum, and, in searching for the cause, concluded that atmospheric pressure was responsible. Whenever scientists observe a phenomenon, they endeavor to determine the reason for its occurrence.

However, they do not pursue their investigations far enough when it comes to man. A human being is surely a very significant phenomenon of Nature, but the reason for his appearance on earth in time and space is seldom discussed. Man is an effect whose cause remains an unelucidated mystery. If science investigates the phenomena of Nature—and man is clearly a phenomenon—why should this area of understanding in large part be disregarded?

Actually, man is an effect in search of its own cause. This is a curious state of affairs. What cosmic forces brought about his existence and what purposes is he supposed to serve? No subject could have greater meaning for any person born into this world. The entire matter transcends the laboratory and touches on questions of cosmic import.

Thus life has confronted us with a riddle that does not exist in the animal or vegetable kingdoms.

What is the cause of which man is the undeniable effect? Theologians may point to God. Some scientists may refer to accident, and other persons may say that the question is unanswerable. However, the definition of the problem is a meaningful part of the solution, and everyone is given the opportunity to ponder the issue.

If Nature confronts us with this persistent problem, it behooves us to study it and not to be deterred by its difficulty.

11/
Theme: A law implies a lawgiver.

Exposition: When a law is passed, we often inquire about the legislator who framed it. We very logically assume that a law would not exist unless someone had conceived and approved it. In other words, the existence of a law presupposes a lawgiver.

Science tells us that it investigates the laws of Nature, but refuses to discuss how the laws ever came to be. Who put them there? Curiously enough, scientists speak much about laws, but almost nothing about a lawgiver. Such an omission seems

rather illogical, but many scientists do not think so. When you see an orderly household, you know that the homemaker has so arranged it. When you find laws in the universe, you expect to find a creative intelligence at work. In many of our schools, however, all reference to a lawgiver would be regarded as an attempt to bring religion into the curriculum.

When we see a building, we assume that an architect has designed it. Is it illogical to deduce that the solar system and the circumgyrating planets are the work of a greater intelligence? This is far more a matter of simple logic than of religion.

Man himself is a great miracle. He is the embodiment of manifold laws. When we see a robot, we are quite sure that someone created it, but when we behold a human being, such an assumption is impugned and often called a religious doctrine.

To acknowledge the varied laws of Nature and say nothing about the lawgiver offends the most elementary sense of logic. The study of science and the course of civilization might be changed if we agreed that a table presupposes a carpenter, and a universe God.

(Readers interested in obtaining the full text of THE TAIL OF THE DRAGON should write to Dr. Francis Merchant at 3509 Avondale Avenue, Knoxville, Tenn. 37917).

CINQUAIN

Richard Ward

I kneel
at the altar
and say a prayer for
the hungry people all over
the world.

HOW CAN WE PROVE THERE IS A GOD?

Samuel M. Silver

WE can't.

The existence of God is a hypothesis, that is, an assumption, but one which rests on logic.

If it doesn't rest on logic, we are not asked in Judaism to accept it.

But think for a moment. Everything in the world reflects a maker and a purpose. Shall we say that the only thing in the world without a maker and a purpose is the world itself?

Because we cannot behold God does not mean that He does not exist. We cannot see electricity, yet we know there is such an entity, for we use it. We cannot see intelligence, yet we measure it.

We know there is electricity and intelligence because we see their results.

So we think we see the results of God's work: in nature, in human nature, in the symmetry of the universe. Look through a telescope and you see a system; look through a microscope and you see system. The author of these intricate systems, as well as of life itself with all its complexities, we call God.

Some Jewish philosophers have said that God laid down certain rules which He will not transgress. For example, He will not make tomorrow yesterday or make two and two equal five. To us the greatest miracle is not the stoppage of nature but the regular processes of life.

God also, according to a point of view held by some Jewish thinkers, limits Himself in another way. He will not force you and me to believe in Him or to accept His commandments.

He wants us to be good. He wants mankind to be peaceful. But He does not treat us like puppets. He lets us know what is right, and the way that we discover what is right through our conscience (which is fortified by religious teachings) is also something of a miracle. But then He permits us to choose whether we, or society, will obey Him.

This is called Freedom of Will, and implies that mankind must decide to walk the path leading to equality and justice, brotherhood and harmony. This means that Judaism does not accept such ideas as predestination or determination.

Judaism contends that God is good, and that evil comes to the world when we disregard the instructions we get from God.

Of course, the Jewish idea of God is that He is invisible, of a form that is beyond our imagining, and that He is absolutely One, not zero, not two, not three, but One.

THE GARDEN

Rita M. Baillies

It's not an ordinary garden,
no flowers grow here,
only pain and devastation,
and sorrow so shattering
that it darkened the earth,
and grief so unbearable
that it made a man sweat
as great drops of blood
on that solitary earth.
And a man cried to God
for relief, not there,
and the sins of the world
befouled the garden air.
And the man, on his knees,
trembled, and he wept,
and outside the garden
his disciples slept.

MY NEW YEAR'S BOOK

John E. Vance

Soon I must write
A new year's book;
On winter's white pages may I show
A gentle quality like snowflakes;
On green pages of spring I want
To list hope-buds given to some;
On gold, summer sheets I desire
To set forth acts of sunshine;
And on autumn's many-colored pages
I must write my autumn deeds.

May there be no venom acts recorded
For me to be ashamed of
In my yearbook;
I want to read it with joy
At the end of next year.

BELIEVE IT

Nixeon Civille Handy

the land will stay, the light
spreads comfort over its dark;
the land grows green deep on stone.
The rain will bring sense to it
You'll see, the land will lift
its hills to mountain size
when God says, "Rise."

TRUE PLACE

Sylvia Argow

Abundant nature comes with the bliss of a true heart.
Meet and commune with the Lord and you shall be holy unto yourself,
Serve love and all conditions of pain and suffering will vanish.
Come and bless your fellow-man with an open heart
In all places, make the Lord your refuge and cleansing will come to you.
Openly believe and pray, and you will have consent
In the privacy of your own prayers.
Be your true self and you will find a portal to Heaven.
False belief brings dishonor to the soul
And dissolves the path of no return.
Challenge no prayer if it be true
And you will be blessed in His true Presence.
Pay homage, sing praises, and the afterglow
And glorification will lift the heart.

FORGIVING

Doris Gassen

God created man for fellowship
with other humans
not according to his riches
nor his race.
Forgiveness must be given
without manmade barriers
if we are to gaze
on His Own Face.

YOUR REFUGE

Nina Willis Walter

Whenever you come to the Lord
with an earnest prayer,
he is there.
When you come with a contrite heart
or a human fear,
he will hear.
Though you may have little to give,
bring him your best;
he supplies the rest.

NEW HOPE

Georga Palmer Dishner

A Miracle...you men of the field,
With eyes blinded by my radiant light,
Flows outward in Grace to forever yield
Love...the triumphant celestial tone
Devour your hopeless, upturned face, eyes,
Vacant forehead...where despair show.
Look now...The Star shines in the skies
To reveal prophecy of...long ago,
And overwhelm even the men...wise,
Devoid of the proclamation foreseen
By Mary's ecstasy of...God's word...
Do not be frightened...yet serene,
Tonight...soon all earth is stirred
With news which will make bold men sing...
For to us, this night, appears a stranger....
And glorious music....bells will ring...
"Christ is born in a lowly Manger."

HUMILITY

Anona McConaghy

Shamrock,
Low in tangled grass,
Blending with Erin's many greens,
Saint Patrick
Chose your simple leaf to portray
The Trinity, a lesson
For all.

BRIEF SERMONS

Estelle D. Broadrick

YOUR HEART is too small to hold the teaching of the Lord, too confined, if you have room for prejudice and bigotry. These emotions become dictators wherever they are given room. They breed resentment, scorn, bitterness, and finally hatred.

In the arrogance of ignorance, true awareness has no chance to speak out against faulty judgment. . . . When Truth or real awareness would whisper, Ego immediately shouts.

Acceptance of facts—facing reality and adjusting to it—is of the greatest importance in any battle you encounter in life.

Life may sometimes be compared to a moat—deep and dangerous and difficult—but one we must cross on a raft of faith if we are to reach the castle of peace.

The needles of Time are ceaselessly knitting. Even when life seems to stand still, the garment of life continues growing.

You may fail God a hundred times. He never fails you once.

I WAS THINKING

Josepha Murray Emms

I WAS THINKING THAT if we were only as willing to overlook the faults of others as we are to expect others to overlook ours, how much it would do to cement human relations.

I was thinking that if those of us who have elderly persons in their homes would show them more love and affection and would help them feel important, how much less medical attention they would need, and how much of the bitterness attributed to old age would disappear.

I was thinking that if each of us would shut out greed and hatred from our hearts, the world would be a better place, and one day wars would vanish from it.

I was thinking if each of us would refuse to listen to cruel gossip and never pass along unkind words, how much less heartache there would be and how much richer our souls would grow.

I was thinking if we would all fill our hearts with music, the songs of birds, the whispering of winds, the melody of music, the music of poetry and song, the laughter of children, and if we have deeper faith in the Creator of all this beauty, what fine people we would become.

THE WORLD PRAYS

Mary Somes

All races fall on their knees, in prayer.
Wipe away your cares by talking to God.

All faiths blended into one common need,
prayer, with the eternal God for today,
tomorrow, and forever-

Almighty and most merciful Father, who has brought me to the beginning of another year, grant me so to remember Thy gifts, and so to acknowledge Thy goodness, as that every year and day which Thou shalt yet grant me, may be employed in the amendment of my life, and in the diligent discharge of such duties as Thy Providence shall allot me. —Samuel Johnson

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

Anna Roubik

PARENTS remember that they are God's representatives in the home. They give much love and affection to their children. By their love of one another they also give a good example. They try to make God real to their children, teaching them simple prayers, talking to them according to their capacity. They pray with them and read with them the Bible or other spiritual books. They try to give their children the vital sense of security that can come only from unqualified love and kindness. They try to give their children the "why" of anything they ask them to do. They try always to know where their children are, and they try to make the home the center of their social life. They try to do things together as a family. They correct their faults with firm but loving discipline. As the children enter their teens, they try to be especially patient and loving, never yielding to the temptation to give up and let the teenagers run their own lives.

Christian parents should remember that they are the primary educators of their children. Theirs, then, is the duty of teaching religion to their children—schools are meant only to help them do it. The Christian family also looks beyond its immediate circle to be aware of the needs of others, the needs of the neighborhood, particularly people with few friends, neglected children, the poor and the underprivileged. Wise parents try to direct their children beyond the selfish and suffocating mediocrity that is often the a danger to the well-off.

THE PUSSY WILLOW THAT FORGOT

Eleanor Ebersole

ON the third day after the winter storm, the skies cleared and the pussy willow saw itself in the waters. The first flash of its white color had appeared. The bright air fluffed the whiteness and the willow knew its own beauty. The willow grew toward summer confidently, never guessing that its whiteness would become stained, grow shaggy, and fall away.

When it did, the willow cried. "Oh, that the mud of the storm would return so that no mirror existed, so that the first fresh vision would remain."

The willow called to each passerby: the thrush going north, the cold water fish, the wind.

"Why am I not so beautiful now? Each of you grows brighter, and I grow more dull!"

They didn't know the answer. Seldom had a pussy willow spoken to them. They had not even seen the first white in the stream. No one knew of this.

The pussy willow waited and waited, past the new green, the autumn's fierce red, the dark brown of winter returned, and the storms. It was finished.

So thought the pussy willow, until it looked again in the mirror of the spring stream. There, plainly on each brown stalk, was the firm whiteness it had seen before, before it became stained.

"Oh, I remember," the pussy willow said.

It remembered its white beauty as long as it could be seen.

Then it forgot, and had to wait the whole winter all over again.

Guide me, O Lord, in all the changes and varieties of the world; that in all things that shall happen, I may have an evenness and tranquility of spirit; that my soul may be wholly resigned to Thy divinest will and pleasure, never murmuring at Thy gentle chastisements and fatherly correction. Amen. —Jeremy Taylor

UNTO THE NEXT GENERATION

C. T. Bowden

I FIRST KNEW Hilda Caldwell as a voice beyond a room-divider when she and my wife shared a hospital room in Newport Beach, California. Mrs. Caldwell was recovering from a broken hip, my wife from a throat cancer operation. One unable to walk, one unable to talk, they comforted each other during a long recovery period.

In the five years since, their acquaintance has strengthened into lasting friendship. Bones mend, and Mrs. Caldwell occasionally walks to do her grocery shopping. June uses the phone and makes her presence known at bingo and other church and social functions, with a partial larynx. We have spent many evenings of stimulating conversation while digesting delightful home-cooked dinners as Mrs. Caldwell's guests.

Mrs. Caldwell, a widow, and her daughter and granddaughter live in a suburban home between a spacious backyard (patrolled by a friendly but alert German Shepherd) and a decorative, tree-edged front complete with vine-sheltered arbor walkway.

Prize-winning paintings adorn the living room walls, the creations of daughter Gwen, a divorcee who has recently returned to college in pursuit of an art career. Donna, the granddaughter, at age eight shows distinct talents inherited from her mother (crayon and pencil drawings enhance her room), and her grandmother's individualistic spirit. There is an almost oriental quality to the uniqueness of this maleless, three-generation household. Each lady's individuality is the difference of knowledge, experience, and generation time-span, while joined in the love of family and acceptance of authority by age seniority.

Accepting the full awareness of her diminishing years, Mrs. Caldwell has recently put her earthly home in order. Secure in faith that extends from childhood, she relates to her daughter and supplements the Sunday school lessons of her granddaughter with the realization that there is a time for birth, a time for living, and a time for death. The encounter with earth is not an end

but a transcendance passing the subject beyond earthly existence. Mrs. Caldwell sent me the written conception of her mental preparation for the celestial journey. Aware that my writing has appeared in religious publications, she believed I might augment her point of view to aid other senior citizens get ready for departure.

Rereading her words, I can find no way to strengthen its purpose or add anything to increase her emotional intuition and boundless faith. I therefore enclose it in its original form and its entirety:

"THESE WORDS are written to be read by those who Run through this span of Mortal Existence and who ask the 'Why and Wherefore and End" of this that might be called a Pilgrimage on this earthy Planet, our World, with some Joys and Sorrows, pains in the mortal frame and in the end, Death. What is the Reason for Death? In the first place, what was the Reason for Life? Somehow most people who think about Life and Death give priority to the question, 'Why Death?' Why do they bemoan Death when it comes too soon?

"There is Life and there is Death. I am going to expound mostly on Death. I am over seventy-five and may soon reach the jumping-off place, leaving behind the cage in which my spark of life has endured through the years, from the moment I drew in my first breath upon the first infant cry to this present day.

"Life is existence in a Finite Form, Death is the escape of the spark of Life into the Infinite Form, the shuffling off of the no longer needed cage that encased it. Death is the Catalyst that makes the change; the remains ultimately dissolve into a state of Nothingness, but the Spark has gone on into Infinitude where it is safe forevermore.

"We come into this life Imperfect, we deal Imperfectly with all the facts and concerns of our way of life. We think imperfectly, we are prone to follow the way of least resistence; we deal in Evil, we commit Evil. For wrong-doing there comes punishment. The final punishment is Death. Through the Catharsis of Death evil is finally purged away. Whether the record of Evil is still laid up against us we have no sure way of knowing

or judging, except as it is recorded in Scriptures: 'For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?'

"As for the life of those who knew very little of it, we should have no fear, they knew no Evil, they were perfect innocence, therefore without Sin and Evil, perfect heirs to Infinitude, the Catalyst of Death having touched them but lightly.

"It is not for us to ask or command the end of Death. Who are we to be so presumptuous? It is for Omnipotence to Command and for Us to Obey, even unto Death.

Hilda R. Caldwell."

I BELIEVE her message will be received as a reminder of a fact which we must all admit—in the midst of life we are in death. Those who have reached Mrs. Caldwell's years will find assurance; for others whose faith needs reinforcing, her words will cleave the darkness of doubt.

A PARADOX

Albert Jacobsen

The cactuses all bristle
With needles, hooks, and spines,
Yet they bear gorgeous flowers
With beautiful designs.
But unarmed grains and grasses
With blooms absurdly small
Feed most of the world's people
And creatures, I recall.

UNDERSTANDING PRAYER

Dennis Barry Carroll

A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING of prayer as a communicating relationship with God can be realized if we have a deeper knowledge of how we are related to God. That relationship exists with God in prayer.

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Prayer does not change God, but it does change us and our relation to God.

In our communication with God in prayer, God speaks to us in love. As we respond and reply, a dialogue develops which alters the situation in which we live. God's guidance, wisdom, and insight enter into our lives to enrich and direct us.

We confess our need of Him, our sin, our weakness, our doubt, our ignorance, our helplessness without Him.

We pray because we are creatures who need God.

Prayer is not the overcoming of God's reluctance; it is a taking hold of God's willingness. There must be a real desire in our hearts. It is God to whom we are speaking, and our prayer is heard.

Whatever may be our situation, we have God to direct our way. God does not turn away from the objects of His care. The children of God are not left alone and defenseless. There is no danger that God will neglect the prayers of His people. God loves His children with infinite love.

When He gave Himself in Christ for the sin of the world, He undertook the care of every person.

Earnestness is the path of Nirvana: thoughtlessness the path of death. Those who are in earnest do not die: Those who are thoughtless are as if dead already. —Buddha

THOMAS MERTON

Dennis Q. McInerny

THOMAS MERTON was born in 1915, the year after the commencement of the "Great War," the war which was confidently, or desperately, touted as the war to end all wars, the war which was going to save the world for democracy. From whatever way you look at it, it turned out to be a disastrous event. Some historians contend that it spelled the beginning of the end for Western civilization; from then to now, they argue, it has all been downhill, and there is worse to come. The thesis is debatable, of course, but there is no doubt that Western civilization has never been quite the same since that brutal conflict. It initiated among Westerners, especially among intellectuals and artists, a monumental crsis of confidence. For those who grew up in the wake of that war, for people like Thomas Merton, times were particularly trying. It seemed indeed as if the sky had fallen in, as if the most fundamental of truths had disappeared forever, buried under the shifting sands of cynicism. The generation which came to maturity between the two world wars was a generation in frantic search of faith, living in a world which had systematically forgotten how to believe.

It has often been said that Merton was a 'man of his times.' At various stages of his life he faithfully reflected the trends of the society of which he was a part. Such an observation is helpful as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough, for it fails to lend proper emphasis to the uniqueness of the man. After all, it is precisely that quality which makes him worthy of our interest. Who was this Thomas Merton? He was the son of two artists, an American mother and a New Zealand father. They had met in Paris, where they had both been studying painting. Thomas was born in southern France, in a small Pyrenees village called Prades. The setting was idyllic, soothingly picturesque (his father had deliberately chosen the locale for his painting) and one might have been tempted to suppose, given

the serenity of the birthplace, that the child was destined to lead a sedate, uncomplicated life. Such was not to be the case. Merton's childhood was anything but regular, revolving as it did around the peripatetic lifestyle of his father. It was a childhood marred severely by the death of his mother when he was six, and of his father when he was fifteen. When he came to live permanently un the United States, at age nineteen, he had already been educated in four different countries. He settled on Long Island and enrolled in Columbia University.

His Columbia years were important, for most of the influences which were to have a profound affect on his development were crntered in that period. His college career was characterized by hyper-activity; he easily fit the description of what we call a Big Man on Campus. If there was anything to get involved in, he got involved in it. In fact, he often spread himself too thin, and some of his activities, like steady drinking and smoking on the one hand and running track or going out for crew on the other, were flatly incompatible. He soon gave up the running and rowing.

From his parents he had inherited not only an artistic temperament, but some definite talent as well. He was a clever cartoonist and before long he became the art editor of *Jester*, a student magazine. But drawing was something he dabbled in; his real passion was writing. He was a constant contributor to *Jester* as well as to two other Columbia publications, *The Spectator* and *The Columbia Review*.

One of the yearbook photos shows a young Tom Merton nattily decked out in a tweed suit and vest; shirt and tie impeccable. There is perched on his head a jauntily cocked felt hat, and conspicuously looped across his breast, a watch chain from which his fraternity pin is prominently pendant. Here we can conclude was a man about town—gregarious, fun-loving, a little devil-may-care. His face shows it: the puckish grin, the Celtic twinkle in his eyes. But if we look closer, we see it shows something else as well—a brooding seriousness. It is the face of a searcher, of the kind of person who, for his sometime frivolity, is earnestly intent upon "the one thing necessary."

Columbia was not just fun and games. It was there, under

the influence of Mark Van Doren, that he became thoroughly acquainted with William Blake and Gerard Manley Hopkins, from whom he learned that the truest art is essentially religious expression. It was important for him to learn that religion and art were not at odds with one another, but there was another side to Merton which required a different kind of reconciliation. In him at the time was the hard-nosed, agnostic rationalist who looked upon religion as innately retrogressive and anti-intellectual. When Merton came to Columbia, he regarded himself as a Socialist and, as a matter of fact, for a short time was a card-carrying member of the Communist Party. He knew his Marx. Religion was the opiate of the people, a serious obstacle to bringing about the needed transformation of human society. And religious leople were mindless buffoons, sorry souls who substituted flaccid emotionalism for solid thought because of their constitutional inability to face up to reality. Then he took a course in sch dastic philosophy from Professor Daniel Walsh; he began to read and be challenged by minds like Etienne Gilson. The end result—perhaps the most critical turning-point in his life—was the realization that religion and reason are not incompatible. A man can be at once an intellectual and a believer. There was another important person whom Merton met at Columbia, the Indian monj and Universuty of Chicago Ph.D., Bramachari. One can reasonably suppose that it was Bramachari who introduced him to the wondrous world of mysticisn, as well as the particulars of Eastern monasticism.

Thomas Merton took his B.A. in English from Columbia in 1938. He immediately enrolled in the graduate school and, the following year, took an M.A. It was his intention to earn a Ph.D. in English and go into a career which would combine teaching and writing. No doubt he had in mind as a model his teacher and friend, Mark Van Doren. But something happened which was to alter radically the direction of his life. He became a convert to Roman Catholicism. This decision was the culmination of a growing dissatisfaction with his life, a sense that he was squandering his time in dissipation while the important things were being neglected. Shortly after his conversion, he began to think

seriously about becoming a priest. He supplied for admission to the Franciscans, was accepted, but at the last moment had second thoughts and withdrew. Professor Walsh told him about the Trappists, the Order of the Cistercians of the Strict Observance, a rather severe monaxtic community which had a foundation in Kentucky. There was some doubt, some hesitation, and then, almost at the drop of a hat, he packed up some scant belongings and headed south. He entered the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemane on December 10, 1941, just as the major civilized nations of the world were beginning their second all-out slaughter within a quarter of a century. With that, Thomas Merton's real life began, for, whatever else he was—and he was many things—he was preeminently the monk.

IF he had not written a word after his entrance into the monastery, today only a handful of friends would know of Thomas Merton. It was his writing which made his name a household word among American Catholics and brought him international renown. Ironically, Merton had decided on entering the monastery that he was going to give up writing; this was one of the "worldly" pursuits which he felt would only stand in the way of his spiritual progress. His superiors thought otherwise, however, and although he put up a game battle, going all the way to the Abbot General of the order, he was finally prevailed upon to regard writing as his monastic work. His first three major publications were books of poetry, all put out by New Direvtions, known for sponsorship of avant-garde writers. Among those who took favorable notice of these early works was the poet Robert Lowell. *The Seven Storey Mountain*, a freewheeling, spirited autobiography, was the book that catapulted him to fame. It appeared in 1948 and immediately became a bestseller. He was to write many books after that, but none matched its popularity. By the time he died, in December 1968, he had produced fifty books besides numerous articles and poems. Once it was made clear to him that his main task in life was to write, he went about it with a passionate earnestness.

We can speak of the influence of Thomas Merton, but cau-

tiously, for influence is a tricky thing to pin down. It is noteworthy that his books sold, and continue to sell, extremely well. Many of them have been translated into several foreign languages (Japanese and Vietnamese among them), and their readership is by no means limited to Catholics, nor to Christians, for that matter. Another clue to his influence is the frequency with which he is quoted; this was especially true during the late sixties, when many peace groups looked to him for strength and inspiration. There seems little doubt that the marked resurgence of monasticism in America, particularly Cistercian monasticism, is traceable to the impact of his writings. At one time the Abbey of Gethsemani, built for around seventy monks, was housing over two-hundred and seventy, and most of them were there because they had read books like *The Seven Storey Mountain* and *The Waters of Siloe*.

Merton was born into a war-wracked world, a world in which the words of Yeats had an ominous appropriateness: 'Things fall apart; the center cannot hold.' The times were dramatic, although somberly so. His life was as dramatic as the larger, cataclysmic events which were going on around him, but his drama, unlike that of Western civilization, was positive. He was a yea-sayer, not a nay-sayer, and he spoke not merely with his mouth but with his entire life. Thomas Merton's chief legacy to us is peace. Th ugh living in a world committed to war as a standard mode of human activity, to violence as the only solution to human problems, he was a man of peace, of love.

The peace and love which Thomas Merton wrote about and lived were hardwon realities. When he talked about peace, he was not simply referring to the absence of conflict, which is a pseudo-peace. Rather he referred to something positive, something transcendent, something which the world could not give. And as for love, it sas the sure and inevitable overflow of being in love with Love, the Source of all beauty and goodness.

Merton was an anomaly; some would prefer to say an anachronism. Here was a sensitive, intelligent, multi-talented man, in many ways a prime product of the modern world, who deliberately chose to turn his back on that world and to live a life of primi-

tive hardship and austerity. The danger would be that we read his life as an act of negation, when in reality it was an act of deliberate affirmation. What often appears contradictory is not contradictory at all upon closer look. Merton loved paradox; he was thoroughly imbued in paradox. It was the poet in him, the mystic. Things are not what they seem. One gains one's life only by losing it. One affirms the world by rejecting it.

The world which Merton rejected was the false world of mindless materialism. He knew that the blind, idolatrous commitment to "things" was what lay at the bottom of all the hatred and violence which envelops our world. The solution for him was simple, as true solutions always are. "The moral evil in the world," he once said, "is due to man's alienation from the deepest truth, from the springs of spiritual life within himself, to his alienation from God." He dedicated his life to seeing out, in himself and others, those fsprings of spiritual life."

(Reprinted from UPDATE: Consortium Press)

MY FAITH

Leola Baker

My faith comes from a source, as old as time,
but, new to me,
All my prayers flow like a river flowing
to the mother sea,
The sea, like my God above, has a sunny shore
which strengthens me.

My faith is a far-off hope, not yet seen,
as real as the sun,
Which warms all the earth to nourish each
and every living thing,
To make triumphant the beauty of the season
that we call spring.

YEAR'S END AND LIFE'S END

Alma Ebert

The year is rounding down the curve
toward Winter's quiet bed;
and bloom and bird have left the field
to rest each busy head.

Through the ages (this I know)
'tis God's eternal plan,
in cycles do we live and grow:
tree, and beast, and man.

Each year we add a higher shelf
on which to keep our treasure;
and, by the wisdom of inner Light,
revise its worth — and measure

to ever more truly, closely match
our Treasure stored in Heaven.
At last we learn that, for increase,
Love and Humility are the leaven.

AN ANCIENT PRAYER

From the cowardice that shrinks from
new truth,
From the laziness that is content with
half-truths,
From the arrogance that thinks it knows
all truth,
O God of Truth deliver us.

PRESIDENT MUSEY AVAILABLE AS SPEAKER. President Reuben L. Musey is available to speak to members who may be conducting prayer sessions in their churches. Please give advance notice as to dates.

NEW BOOKS IN LIBRARY. The Fellowship's library has been enriched by additions—Joel S. Goldsmith's "Living Between Two Worlds," "The Thunder of Silence," and "The Mystical I;" Eric Butterworth's "Life Is For Loving," and "Leaves From The Scattered Brotherhood," all published by Harper & Row and all the gift of Frank Mastropaolo; and "Let My People Live..." by Dagobert Runes, "Some Paradoxes Of Paul" by Edmund B. Keller, and "A Workable Faith" by June Smallwood Wood, all gifts of the Philosophical Library, and "Rhapsody On a Requiem Theme," a poem by Alois Charles Taschler III (Exposition Press).

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THANK YOU

Last December
the Fellowship welcomed
more new subscribers than in any
previous month of its history.
This occurred because
members were so generous
about giving gift-subscriptions to
friends in this silver-anniversary year.
We gratefully appreciate it.

P.G.
R. L. M.
K. G. B.

BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM

Joy Bergman

I am part of every bird
and mountain and camel
and the sea at its deepest

I am part of every man and woman
whom I love, because
I created

Every man and woman is found
in my arms
I embrace every being

My heart which is love
was pierced, and
therefore opened

Gushing forth living waters
that can withstand
all time

Every man and woman is part
of me
And I of Him.